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ABSTRACT

This monograph provides home economics educators with a resource that contains an overview of youth at risk, reviews motivation theory as a basis for educational decision making, and provides practical teaching suggestions that will help home economics teachers reach and teach these students. The guide is organized in five sections. Following a one-page introductory section, the second section describes youth at risk, taking into account environmental descriptors, behavior descriptors, and individual characteristics. It is followed by a discussion of the individual differences that affect teaching and learning. The fourth section focuses on motivation, including theories of motivation and motivating factors in teaching. The final section offers practical suggestions for motivating students in the classroom. A bibliography contains 59 references. An appendix consists of a historical review of motivational psychology from the 1930s to the 1990s. (KC)

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# MOTIVATING YOUTH AT RISK

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# Foreward

Education is especially visible in the media this year because President Bush is asking communities to work together to reach his educational goals for the year 2000. The goals will require an enormous community commitment to education. Most of the goals require motivation on all of our parts. This monograph addresses ways we can motivate a particularly important group in schools, students at risk.

Motivating Youth At Risk provides an overview of important data about students at risk. One–third of the children in the United States are at risk of failing in school before they enter kindergarten. The fact that our students are at risk is not the fault of the schools or the children. It is critical that we remember that as we work to motivate youth at risk. We are their chance for renewed hope in a society which has failed them in many of their other daily life encounters.

Dr. Sharon S. Redick and Dr. Ann Vail have provided us with an important resource for fostering motivation and self confidence in our students who need it the most. On behalf of all the members of the Home Economics Education Association, I would like to thank Sharon and Ann for this important contribution to Home Economics Education. As home economics educators, we can now operationalize these ideas and make our home economics classrooms a more supportive and understanding place.

This publication also required time and effort from Dr. Jan Wissman who serves as chair of our Publications Committee. Jan is an important link to our membership through the publications we produce. We appreciate her expertise and enthusiasm. Members of the Publication Committee are constantly working on keeping updated publications a part of your HEEA membership.

Finally, I would like to thank Catherine Leisher, Executive Director of HEEA. Cathie has chosen to retire this year and we will miss the positive dynamics she provided for HEEA for numerous years. Cathie has motivated many of us when we were at risk of giving up hope. The members of HEEA thank you Cathie for watching out for the interests of the association and of all home economics teachers. We will miss you.

As I end my term as President of HEEA, I invite all of you to take an active role in your association. As professionals, we must be motivated to keep our associations from becoming at risk. We need every member to take their turn to become an officer, join a committee, or recruit a new member. I have enjoyed the opportunity and I thank you for your support.

Cathy Love
President, HEEA, 1989–1991

There are three things

to remember about education,

The first one is motivation,

The second one is motivation,

The third one is motivation.

Terrell H. Bell

# Preface

**This monograph is based on a presentation, Motivating Youth At Risk, sponsored by the Home Economics Education Association at the 1990 American Vocational meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. One of the primary concerns of teachers is the motivation of students. Students who are motivated to learn achieve more than students who are not motivated to learn. Youth at risk are often less motivated to learn than other students. It was our intent to provide home economics educators with a resource that presents an overview of youth at risk, reviews motivation theory as a basis for educational decision-making, and provides practical teaching suggestions that will help the home economics educator reach and teach these audiences. Our hope is that this will be a useful document for home economics teachers, supervisors, and teacher educators.**

*Sharon Redick*
*Ann Vail*

# Acknowledgements

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Ron Redick for editing assistance;

Participants in the summer class, Effective Teaching Strategies for At Risk students, for field testing this document (names, schools and home towns are listed below:

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And finally, we acknowledge home economics teachers who teach at-risk students every day across this nation and who provided the reason for this document.

Sharon Redick
Ann Vail

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# I. INTRODUCTION:

Who are youth at risk? Let us begin by sharing with you the words of a teacher, Naomi White, which appeared in Progressive Education.

I have taught in high school for ten years. During that time I have given assignments, among others, to a murderer, a pugilist, a thief and an imbecile.

The murderer was a quiet little boy who sat in the front seat and regarded me with pale blue eyes; the pugilist lounged by the window and let loose at intervals in a raucous laugh that startled even the geraniums; the thief was a gay hearted Lothario with a song on his lips; and the imbecile, a shifty eyed little animal seeking the shadows. The murderer awaits death in the state penitentiary; the pugilist lost an eye in a brawl in Hong Kong; the thief, by standing on tip toe, can see the window of my room from the county jail; and the once gentle eyed little moron beats his head against a padded wall in the state asylum.

All these pupils once sat in my room, sat and looked at me gravely across worn brown desks. I must have been a great help to those pupils...I taught them the rhyming scheme of the Elizabethan sonnet and how to diagram a complex sentence.

These words have as much meaning today as they did in 1943 when Naomi White wrote them. As home economics teachers, we might have to say, "I must have been a great help to those pupils . . . I taught them to design and furnish a dream house, bake a cake, make a throw pillow, plan a wedding." We all can think of an example of content we might question under certain circumstances. Naomi White's story reflects an intriguing issue in education. Are we teachers of content . . . or . . . teachers of students. She reminds us that teachers face a wide variety of students

in their classrooms every day. It is important to remember that we can not meet all of the students needs all of the time; however, increasing our knowledge about students and enhancing our teaching skills enables us to be more effective teachers of youth at risk.

## II. YOUTH AT RISK

It has been estimated that 12 million youth in America are at risk (Youth Policy, 1988). **Youth at risk are defined as children and adolescents who are not able to acquire and/or use the skills necessary to develop their potential and become productive members of society** (Dunn & Dunn, 1987).

Youth who are classified as at risk include youth in poverty; youth in stress; youth without a home; abused and neglected youth; academically disadvantaged youth; youth from dysfunctional families; youth with eating disorders; chemically abusive youth; sexually active youth; homosexual youth; youth with sexually transmitted diseases; pregnant youth and young parents; delinquent youth; youth in gangs; drop-outs; suicidal youth; youth members of Satanic cults; over-employed youth; mentally ill youth; disabled and handicapped youth; and lonely and disengaged youth. While youth at risk come from a variety of groups and populations, as listed, they have some common indicators which we as teachers can observe.

According to The National Center for Research in Vocational Education (1988), youth at risk exhibit specific indicators. They probably do not have all of the indicators, but they probably do have more than one.

**Youth at risk tend to exhibit the following characteristics:**

- high rate of absenteeism and truancy
- low participation in extracurricular activities
- basic skill deficiencies
- difficulty with higher order thinking skills
- over age
- low tolerance for structured activities
- lower occupational aspirations than their peers
- socially isolated
- tendency to prefer physical over mental activities
- external locus of control
- bored in school
- history of academic failure
- lack of program planning and clearly defined life goals
- frequent movement from school to school

- expressed feelings of alienation, powerlessness, and meaninglessness
- difficulty in communicating with teachers and students
- poor self-concept
- deficient support systems
- credit deficient
- behavioral problems and poor impulse control
- siblings are dropouts
- low socioeconomic status
- minority background

**This all adds up to students who:**

- lack self-esteem, "I'm no good."
- have a sense of not being needed, "I don't count" and "I'm not important."
- lack a meaningful role to fulfill, "Since I'm no good and I don't count, what difference could I make."
- have an inadequate vision for the future, "I can't see the future, much less see myself in the future."

Perhaps Charlie Brown sums up how these students must feel.

PEANUTS
YOU'RE WEAK. YOU'RE HOMELY. YOU'RE STUPID. YOU'RE...
NOW WAIT A MINUTE! IT'S ONLY EIGHT O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING...YOU'RE STARTING IN ON ME KIND OF EARLY, AREN'T YOU?
I CAN'T HELP IT, CHARLIE BROWN...
YOU HAVE SO MANY FAULTS IT TAKES A WHOLE DAY TO LIST THEM!
SCHULZ

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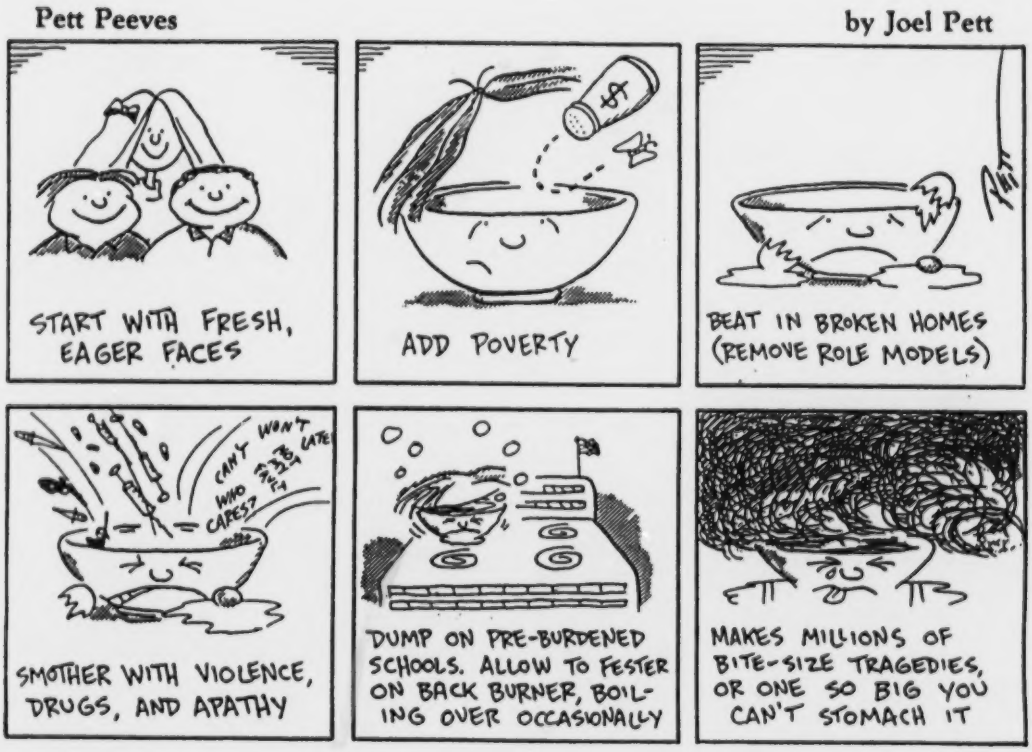
These are our students. The students we face everyday in our classrooms. As home economics educators, our challenge is to help these students to acquire the necessary skills to achieve their full potential and to be productive members of society.

This cartoon provides a summary for the situation at hand.


Pett Peeves
by Joel Pett
START WITH FRESH, EAGER FACES
ADD POVERTY
BEAT IN BROKEN HOMES (REMOVE ROLE MODELS)
SMOTHER WITH VIOLENCE, DRUGS, AND APATHY
DUMP ON PRE-BURDENED SCHOOLS. ALLOW TO FESTER ON BACK BURNER, BOILING OVER OCCASIONALLY
MAKES MILLIONS OF BITE-SIZE TRAGEDIES, OR ONE SO BIG YOU CAN'T STOMACH IT

Reprinted by permission from Joel Pett

Today we recognize that unless we educate every child, we all suffer. At-risk students place society at risk by what they do to us, our children, our property, and our educational system.

Our students bring these indicators, characteristics, needs, and problems to our classrooms along with deep seated attitudes about school and education. These attitudes can be illustrated by these cartoons:

*"that's 693 school days down and 1,497 school days to go."*

Reprinted by permission of James Estes

*"I don't know if I have an inquiring mind or not, and I don't care to find out."*

Reprinted by permission of Frank Cotham

*"There it is . . . our gulag."*

Reprinted by permission of James K. Warren

*"I think the good old days were the ones before we started school."*

Reprinted by permission of Bo Brown

*"As a duly elected hall monitor, am I allowed to pack heat?"*

Reprinted by permission of James Estes

The previously mentioned list of at-risk indicators from the National Center for Research in Vocational Education only touches the surface of the problems of at-risk students. The causal factors which lead to these problems must also be addressed. "The concepts that surround the at-risk student are complex, filled with frustration for those who attempt to understand them, filled with despair for those who attempt to affect them, and filled with tragedy for the individuals who meet the criteria for being at risk" (Gross & Capuzzi, 1989, p. 4).

Youth can be at risk for a variety of reasons. Youth are at risk because of the environment in which they live, grow, and learn. They are at risk because of their own behaviors whether those behaviors are reflected towards themselves or others. Some youth are at risk because of individual characteristics which impact how others view them or influences how they view themselves. Following are examples of each of these reasons and specific situations.

## A. ENVIRONMENTAL DESCRIPTORS

### 1. YOUTH IN POVERTY

Over 25 years ago, our nation declared a war on poverty in order to improve the lives of our children. The United States has not won the war on poverty. Today we find ourselves wondering what has happened because little has changed. During the last 25 years, we have consistently lost the war. In 1989, young people represented 39.5% of America's poor. Income for the average poor family in 1988 was $4,851 below the poverty line. For female-headed poor families, the discrepancy was $5,206.

With incomes this low, the result is that basic family needs are not being met -- food, clothing, shelter, medical support. This transfers to sickness, psychological stress, malnutrition, underdevelopment and daily hardship that eventually takes its toll on young minds and bodies. Many teens are working in order to meet these needs for themselves, not to buy cars or designer jeans and tennis shoes. Former U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos estimated that "by the year 2000, as many as one-third of our young people will be disadvantaged and at risk" (Reed & Sautter, 1990).

### 2. YOUTH IN STRESS

Adolescents experience a range of life changes during their development which potentially has an influence on their growth into adulthood. The resulting stress can be a positive or negative factor for adolescents. Terry and Milliken (1989) provide a framework for examining adolescent stressors.

<u>Relationship stressors include:</u>

- peer pressure
- sexuality
- performance expectations of significant others
- cultural considerations

Biological/developmental stressors include:

- physical maturation
- separation and individuation
- psychological growth

Individual level stressors include:

- personality types
- family stability
- negative effects of poor diets
- career/vocational choices

Youth experiencing stress in any or many of these areas can be helped through the development of support systems, availability of crisis management assistance and the development of healthy coping skills and intervention techniques.

## 3. YOUTH WITHOUT A HOME

According to the Children's Defense Fund (1991), anywhere between 68,000 and 500,000 children are homeless every night. This frequently means these students are schoolless as well. Families with children now make up one-third of the nation's homeless population. Poor health and the constant emotional distress of extreme poverty and unstable housing put children and adolescents months or years behind in their physical and cognitive development.

The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that 450,700 children are runaways. Nearly half of these teens leave home involuntarily. In a recent study, it was estimated that 46 percent of runaways had been pushed out or encouraged to leave home by their parents, 39 percent left because of physical abuse, and 26 percent of the teens left because of sexual abuse. These students are faced with a miserable existence on the streets of America, often confronted by pimps, drug dealers, and pornographers (Rothman & David, 1986).

## 4. ABUSED AND NEGLECTED YOUTH

From 1976 to 1984, child abuse increased by 158 percent. It is generally believed that the child abuse and neglect rates are underreported. The exact amount of abuse and neglect are difficult to measure since much of it occurs in the privacy of a home during routine daily activities (Jensen, 1988). Adolescents are more likely to be sexually, physically, and emotionally abused than any other age group of children. Approximately 26 of every 1000 twelve-to seventeen-year-olds have been abused or neglected. In 1986, more than 1 million children and teens experienced injury or impairment because of abuse or neglect (Gans, 1990).

The following definitions were identified in the 1988 Study of National Incidence and Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect:

**Abuse** consists of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

Physical abuse encompasses beatings and punishment which result in injury or impairment.

Sexual abuse includes penile penetration, molestation of genitals, exposure, and fondling.

Emotional abuse can be physical confinement, hostile or verbal threats of punishment, or withholding of life necessities.

**Neglect** consists of physical, educational, and emotional neglect.

Physical neglect addresses failure to provide medical care, lack of supervision for extended periods of time, abandonment, and expulsion from the home.

Educational neglect includes permitting truancy, failing to enroll a child of mandatory school age, and refusing to seek treatment for a learning disorder.

Emotional neglect includes inadequate nurturance, abuse of spouse in front of the child, permitting abuse of chemical substance, and failure to seek psychological care for depression and attempted suicide.

**Maltreatment** is a form of abuse or neglect which occurs when alcoholism, prostitution, and drug abuse affect the child.

## 5. ACADEMICALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

Students who are academically disadvantaged have been exposed to inappropriate educational experiences in at least one of three different areas: school, family, and community. Using this definition, a conservative estimate places about one-third of the total public school within this group. Some estimates run as high as 40% (Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1989).

## 6. YOUTH FROM DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

A myriad of circumstances can create dysfunctional families. Dysfunctional students come from families in which the behavior of all family members has changed due to the actions or condition of one family member. The resulting behavior changes are often inappropriate and deemed dysfunctional. Students bring these same dysfunctional behaviors to school everyday and use them in their interactions with their peers and their teachers. Dysfunctional behaviors result from family members being alcoholics, unemployed, incarcerated, chronically or terminally ill, abusive, overly permissive, and so on. Students choose these behaviors and must also choose new behaviors.

## B. BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTORS

### 1. YOUTH WITH EATING DISORDERS

Eating disorders plague many young people. They are classified as mild-to-moderate obesity, severe obesity, bulimia, and anorexia.

**Mild-to-moderate obese** people tend to overeat compulsively and binge on high fat, high calorie foods or eat constantly throughout the day. They rarely exercise. People with **severe obesity** binge on high fat, high calorie foods even after eating a large meal and rarely, if ever exercise.

Some **bulimics** are underweight, others are slightly overweight. Their weight often changes noticeably. They binge on easily swallowed foods and then purge to get rid of the calories. Many bulimics over-exercise (Krames Communications, 1988). Bulimics comprise 1-2% of the adolescent population with 90% of them being female (National Anorexic Aid Society).

**Anorexics** simply will not eat or eat tiny amounts of low fat, low calorie food after skipping several meals. Most over-exercise obsessively to lose weight and stay thin (Krames Communication, 1988). They have an intense drive for thinness, relentless diet efforts, and extreme weight loss leading to emaciation and possible death. It is estimated that one percent of all adolescents develop anorexia nervosa with females comprising 90-95% of that number (National Anorexic Aid Society).

### 2. CHEMICALLY ABUSIVE YOUTH

A variety of abusive chemical substances are available to youth today. They include such substances as alcohol, tobacco, steroids, marijuana, cocaine, crack, amphetamines, and other drugs.

- One out of every six children will use marijuana by the seventh grade, and for some, this early experimentation leads to regular use.
- By the twelfth grade, 91% of teenagers will have tried alcohol, 68% will have tried cigarettes, and 61% will have tried an illegal substance.
- Nearly one in three high school seniors say that most of their friends get drunk at least once a week.
- About one in six say that none of their friends get drunk that often (Johnston, O'Malley, & Bachman, 1986).

There is evidence to indicate that children who are socially incompetent and aggressive are at a greater risk of developing later drug problems than those who are more popular. Children who are inappropriately aggressive quickly develop reputations as being difficult and become increasingly isolated and rejected. Some of these teens develop academic problems as well. If they have not developed positive relationships with their peer groups or their teachers and have repeatedly experienced failure and the consequent loss of self-esteem, at-risk behaviors such as drug experimentation might represent attempts to escape or deny current life difficulties or to flaunt family and school expectations and regulations. For

others, drug experimentation might represent the only way to earn approval from others who are actively experimenting with drugs (Rhodes & Jason, 1988).

### 3. SEXUALLY ACTIVE YOUTH

Rates of sexual activity vary according to several sources and depend upon the definitions used. According to the National Research Council (1987), the rates of sexual activity among teenagers increased drastically in the 1970s but have leveled off since then. By age 18, 44% of young women and 64% of young men are sexually experienced. The Alan Guttmacher Institute reports that the proportion of sexually active girls aged 15 to 17 is on the rise, going from 32% in 1982 to 38% in 1988. By age 19, 75% of unmarried women were having sexual intercourse. According to the 1988 National Survey of Adolescent Males, a third of boys surveyed were sexually active at 15, half at 16, two-thirds at 17, and 86% at 19 (Hersch, 1991).

Often forgotten are the emotional ramifications of early sexual activity. In addition to the physical hazards, students experience emotional trauma when faced with peer pressure to have early sex, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, and decisions regarding abortions. No doubt about it, teens are having sex, but it is not always physically and emotionally safe.

### 4. HOMOSEXUAL YOUTH

Homosexuality is a taboo subject in most American classrooms. In a study conducted by the National Gay Task Force, 20 percent of lesbians and 50 percent of gay men reported being harassed, threatened, or physically abused in junior or senior high school because of their sexual orientation. Some reported that teachers simply ignored the harassment and humiliation (Sears, 1987).

### 5. YOUTH WITH SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

The Center for Disease Control estimates that 33,000 new sexually transmitted diseases occur each day, 12 million each year. AIDS is by far the most serious, but others occur as well. They also estimate the number of cases of sexually transmitted diseases in 1990 to be the following: chlamydia, 4 million; trichomoniasis, 3 million; nonspecific urethritis, 1.2 million; genital warts, 1 million; gonorrhea, 800,000; genital herpes, 500,000; hepatitis B, 200,000; and syphilis, 16,000 (Hersch, 1991).

According to a report in the Medical Clinics of North America, AIDS is the seventh leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year olds. While adolescents still represent only 1.2% of all AIDS cases, the number doubles every 14 months. The Center for Disease Control reports that 21 percent of the diagnosed AIDS cases in the United States are among young adults age 20 to 29 (Healy & Coleman, 1988/1989). Since we now know that the incubation period for HIV is up to five years, it is realistic to think that they became infected during high school.

Three factors continue to impact teenagers' knowledge of AIDS and subsequent lack of behavior changes: (a) many students continue to believe incorrect information about the transmission of AIDS (i.e. mosquitoes, casual contact); (b) teens tend to perceive AIDS as a "gay disease," thus not a disease that will personally affect them; and (c) although many teens do have knowledge of AIDS and precautionary actions to prevent infection, few practice safe sex (Fennel, 1990).

## 6. PREGNANT YOUTH AND YOUNG PARENTS

While it seems as though teenage pregnancy is increasing, fewer teens are having babies today than in the previous two decades. The difference is that teen pregnancy and teen parenthood have received much greater visibility, due largely to the enactment of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which protects students in federally funded education programs against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy or parenthood. Teen parents of previous generations were oftentimes married or married as a result of the pregnancy. In addition, many teen mothers are opting to keep their baby rather than give it up for adoption. While teen pregnancy used to be viewed as a health problem, experience has taught us that with good health and proper medical care, teen pregnancy is not a medical risk. Today, the attention focuses on teen pregnancy being one of the root causes of poverty. Teen mothers tend to drop out of school and have difficulty receiving the training necessary to actively participate in the labor market (Kenney, 1987).

## 7. DELINQUENT YOUTH

More than 150,000 adolescents under the age of 22 are confined in correctional institutions in the United States for crimes such as larceny, theft, and aggravated assault. Of these, about 80% are in adult facilities, while the remaining live in juvenile facilities. Another 300,000 are spending time in pretrial detention centers and jails. Lower class, minority, and male youth are disproportionately represented among the incarcerated. A milieu of possible causes for delinquency of youth exists including anti-social behavior patterns, inadequate family and peer relations, repeated school failure, and gang participation (sources cited in Misra, 1990).

## 8. YOUTH IN GANGS

"A gang is a group of people that form an allegiance for a common purpose, and engage in unlawful or criminal activity" (Jackson & McBride, 1987, p. 20). Although gangs tend to have an ethnic identification, they are not unique to ethnic groups. They can be found among many ethnic groups: white (Stoners, White Power Supremacists); Black (Crips, Bloods): Hispanic (V-13, Compadres); and Asian (Flying Dragons). Gangs tend to be organized around ethnic groups due to existing friendships, common heritage, and easily identified common traits. It is important to remember that gangs do not represent the ethnic community of which they are a part. Those recruited to gangs frequently feel they are "nobodies." Gangs provide companionship, excitement, protection, affirmation, and security (Boozer, 1989).

The National School Safety Center lists the following behaviors as warning signs for gang membership:

- rumors or reliable information that a student has not been home for several nights
- evidence of increased substance abuse
- abrupt changes in behavior and personality
- newly acquired and unexplained wealth often showered on or shared with peers (anything from sharing bags of candy with younger children to a flurry of extravagant spending by older students)
- requests to borrow money
- hanging around but being unable to discuss the problem
- evidence of mental or physical abuse
- a dress code that applies to a few, i.e., wearing of a color, style, or item of clothing, a particular hair style, and symbols of identification

## 9. YOUTH MEMBERS OF SATANIC CULTS

In a survey conducted by Seventeen magazine, 12 percent of the responding teenagers have "some sort of faith" in Satanism. Four levels of involvement in the cultic realm exist. Dabblers practice spiritual rituals sometimes tied to an organized religion. They include witches, warlocks, and heavy metal enthusiasts. Self-styled satanists organize around a theme or a person such as Charles Manson. Another group practices animal and/or human sacrifices. An organized, international cult also exists in which the members appear to lead double lives--normal everyday people and criminals.

## 10. DROP OUTS

Actual numbers vary depending on the definition used, but any way you cut it, the dropout rate from American education is high. Various sources identify a national dropout rate between 25 and 30 percent. In large urban centers, this rate soars as high as 60 percent. "Every year 700,000 to 1 million youth walk away from school" (Weber, 1988). Astounding as it is, one of four students does not graduate; in inner cities, approximately one of two fail to complete high school. For Native American and some Hispanic students, the dropout rate is higher. About 85 percent of urban Native Americans and 70 percent to 80 percent of Puerto Ricans drop out of school (Bhaerman & Koop, 1988).

Dropping out of school is merely the beginning of a future of dropping out for most students. According to Sechler and Crowe (1987):

- Dropouts are 6 to 10 times more likely to be involved in criminal acts than their in-school peers.
- Thirty percent of those who used drugs casually and 51 percent of those who used drugs at least once a week dropped out.

- Dropouts are far more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates.
- One study found that half the dropouts and dropout-prone students in a middle class suburb seriously considered suicide and nearly one-third attempted it.

### 11. SUICIDAL YOUTH

Among youth in the 15-24 age group, suicide is the second leading cause of death. Males commit suicide five times more frequently than females, but females attempt suicide five times more frequently than males. Up to fifty percent of high school students have considered suicide including going as far as planning the actual act (Gans, 1990).

### 12. OVER-EMPLOYED YOUTH

Adolescent work has been accepted and promoted in American society; however, the focus and intensity of that work have changed resulting in placing many teen-age workers at-risk. Most state laws permit a 15-hour work week for teenagers in school. Many students work well beyond that number in routine, unchallenging positions, and often their commitment to school suffers. Research according to Greenberger and Steinberg (1986), shows that extensive part-time work during the school year:

- undermines education
- leads to luxury consumer spending rather than savings
- appears to promote some forms of delinquent behaviors
- results in high stress levels which lead to increased alcohol and marijuana use
- leads to cynicism about the pleasures of productive labor

## C. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS DESCRIPTORS

### 1. MENTALLY ILL YOUTH

As many as 12% of those under age 18 are estimated to have mental or developmental disorders, and nearly half of those are handicapped severely by their illness. Of the estimated 7.5 million American youth that suffer from mental illness, only 20% are being treated with the appropriate clinical care. Most of these young people could lead fulfilling and productive lives if treated properly. Many do not receive the care they need because of ignorance, fear, misunderstanding, prejudice and stigmatization. Mental illness is often further complicated by contributing to suicide attempts, drug, and alcohol abuse (Judd, 1990).

### 2. DISABLED AND HANDICAPPED YOUTH

"A student may be disabled without being handicapped. A disability is some sort of impairment. Only when it interferes with performance in some important area does it become a handicap" (Lewis & Doorlag, 1991). Disabilities and handicaps can be categorized in a variety of ways.

**The following is a partial list of disabilities and handicaps:**

- learning disabilities
- behavior disorders
- retardation
- speech and language disorders
- physical and health handicaps
- vision impairments
- hearing handicaps
- attention deficit disorder

### 3. LONELY AND DISENGAGED YOUTH

Lonely and disengaged youth often have no close peer relationships, no confidantes, or no intimate relations with a family member. Often they withdraw into themselves and live in a world they create within their mind. On the other hand, loud, boisterous youth might also be lonely and seeking ways to fit in or to belong. Both types of students need a sense of belonging to something -- a family, a close circle of friends, a class, or an FHA/HERO chapter.

## D. SUMMARY

In describing these multiple groups of at-risk students, we run the risk of convincing the reader that, for the most part, the cause of being at risk rests within the student or within the students' family. Larry Cuban, Professor of Education at Stanford (1989), urges us to consider a less popular way of framing the problem. Perhaps it is the "inflexible structure of schools which contribute to the conditions that breeds academic failure and unsatisfactory student performance" (p. 782). Therefore, we now turn to addressing individual differences of students which have the potential to impact learning.

# III. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES THAT AFFECT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Many students have difficulty in school because their teacher teaches the way in which he/she learns rather than the way(s) in which the student(s) learn. Oftentimes, students are not achieving, not because of some tragic learning disability, but rather because their personal and cultural characteristics are in conflict with what dominates in the classroom. We assume students are basically the same; they are not. Important individual differences along with obvious similarities are often overlooked. Sometimes in order to provide equal opportunity it is necessary to provide unequal and uneven treatment.

Bennett (1986) identifies individual differences known to affect learning. They are complex and interrelated and should not be regarded as mutually exclusive categories.

**Individual differences known to affect learning include:**

- learning style
- need for structure
- learning skills
- aptitudes and achievements
- self-concept
- interests
- physical attributes
- peer relationships
- family conditions
- values, attitudes, and beliefs
- sense of ethnic identity
- motivation

The information available on **learning style** is extensive and abundant. Rather than enter into the various approaches, theories, and assessment tools, let it suffice to state that learning style is a pattern of behavior and performance by which an individual approaches educational experiences (National Task Force on Learning Style and Brain Behavior, p. 94). Teachers sometimes label students with a learning disability rather than identify the problem as a mismatch of teacher and student learning styles. Students use a variety of behaviors and methods of performance which enable them to learn. Effective teaching will result when such diversity in approaches are considered.

**Structure** addresses the needs of students for high, medium, and low levels of directions, classroom control, learning activities, and so on.

Students bring a multitude of **learning skills** with them to the classroom which they may or may not have in common with other students. Included are such skills as critical thinking, hand-eye coordination, muscle control, decision making, and interpersonal problem solving. Students come to classrooms with differences in learning skills. Not all students have acquired the necessary fundamental and basic skills needed to progress through the material in our classroom. Therefore, we have a need to sometimes teach and oftentimes reinforce basic skills in all that we do. Besides, it is these skills that are the building blocks for all of education. Recognition that diversity in the amount of information students know when they come to us influences how we approach them.

Students also differ in their **aptitudes and achievements**. Drawing upon these unique talents and aptitudes can create intrigue in our classroom. Care must be taken to not label students who lack this natural ability as incapable.

**Self-concept** is a complex set of beliefs about oneself. It is commonly believed that a positive self-concept is necessary for success in school, but it is not sufficient by itself.

Students differ in their **interests.** Capitalizing on these interests helps teachers make learning personal and relevant. Often, special interests can be catalysts for learning in other areas if these areas somehow relate to the students' interests.

**Physical characteristics** are the major visible individual difference. These characteristics include growth and development, attractiveness, size, strength, age, coordination, race, and gender. These characteristics may impact teacher/student interaction which has the potential to influence student learning.

**Relationships with one's peers** impact student achievement. Students range from those having an extensive network of friends to those completely isolated from their peer group. Teachers sensitive to this continuum can facilitate the joining of students on both ends of the continuum.

**Diversity of family conditions** is prevalent in classrooms of today. Students come from homes with single parent families; nuclear families; extended families; foster families; blended families; and even no families. Families, most often, provide the social, emotional, economic, political, ethical, and educational context in which the child grows and develops. These contexts differ as greatly as the number of students in the classroom.

**Beliefs, attitudes, and values** represent one's culture. They are developed through shared and past experiences and influence one's behavior and perception of the world. These too will differ according to one's past.

A sense of **ethnic identity** is related to the degree to which a member of any ethnic group retains his/her original culture, including language. In this sense, original culture refers to national origins, such as Italian and German or ethnic groups such as African-Americans.

**Motivation** is the concept we use when we describe the forces acting on or within a person to initiate or direct behavior (Petri, 1981, p. 3). It is the explanatory concept used to make sense of our behavior (p. 4).

Addressing each of the above individual differences is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of at-risk students. Due to limitations, we have chosen to focus on motivation. Research indicates that student motivation is a primary concern of teachers (Brophy, 1987; Gray, 1990).

# IV. MOTIVATION

## A. INTRODUCTION

One day in July, an unemployed security guard stormed into a fast food restaurant in California and opened fire upon the people eating there. He shot down 21 people, total strangers, before he was killed by police. Why did he do it?

Tomorrow morning, a group of students will come into the classroom, sit in uncomfortable chairs, move very little, and talk less while someone lectures to them for up to an hour. Why will they do it?

Last autumn, when school began, some students trooped into the classroom to start a new academic year while others decided to leave school and not complete the necessary graduation requirements. What made one student choose to continue and another choose to drop out?

For any action a person performs, we may ask: "Why did they do that?" When we ask that question, we are asking about the person's motivation. Questions about motivation are questions about the causes of actions. Motivations for actions will differ from student to student.

The study of motivation is the search for principles that will help us to understand why people initiate, choose, or persist in specific actions in specific circumstances (Mook, 1980, p. 3, 4). The scientific study of motivation is a recent development in human history, but the attempt to understand the world has been characteristic of the human mind for as far back as we have records. The study of motivation grew out of the scientific studies of psychology and can be traced back to the 1930s. (See appendix for historical review of psychological theories).

Theorists have differed in their explanations of what activates and directs behavior. Perhaps the most historical controversy in the field of motivation is whether behavior should be conceptualized as "mechanistic" or "cognitive". These two conceptual approaches differ in the extent to which higher mental processes are involved to account for the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of goal-directed behavior (Weiner, 1972).

In general, **mechanistic** analyses of behavior are characterized as stimulus response theories. These theories are based on the belief that behavior is instigated by the onset of external or internal stimuli which elicit a response which over time can become a habit or pattern of behavior (Weiner, 1972, p. 1).

**Cognitive** theories of motivation conceive of an action sequence as instigated not by stimulation but by some source of information. External or internal events are encoded, categorized, and transformed into a belief. The direction and persistence of behavior is a function of intervening thought processes (Weiner, 1972, p. 2).

As teachers, we might ask, "Why study theories?" Understanding theories help teachers make educational decisions in various contexts. A practical suggestion may or may not work. Without the knowledge of the theoretical base we cannot ascertain why.

Teachers may also ask, "Why are there so many theories?" "What theory best explains behavior I see in the classroom?" It is important to note that each category of theorists, using their own methods and concepts have provided us with ideas, findings, and phenomena that the others, using their methods and concepts, would never have discovered. Some of our most productive and insightful educators have been able to pull useful ideas from all of them (Mook, 1987, p. 10-12).

Three major points of view emerge to distinguish theories which have been brought forth to explain actions: **behavioral, cognitive, and humanistic.**

## B. VIEWS OF MOTIVATION

### 1. BEHAVIORAL VIEW OF MOTIVATION

Behavioral theorists stress that individuals are motivated when their behavior is reinforced. Behaviorist believe that to motivate students is to apply the principles for strengthening, maintaining, and suppressing behaviors. Behaviorists assume that we have basic physiological needs that motivate us -- hunger, thirst, etc. These needs are met by primary reinforcers such as food. When these needs are met, certain events and experiences are associated with the primary reinforcers, probably through classical conditioning. These associated events become secondary reinforcers. Thus to the behaviorists, we are motivated to behave as we do to gain primary and secondary reinforcers and avoid punishment. Extrinsic motivators are central to these theories. Social learning theorists emphasize the impact of identification and imitation, pointing out that observing someone else benefiting from a certain type of behavior may motivate a person to do the same. Behavioral theorists urge teachers to reinforce students with praise and rewards of various kinds when correct or desired responses occur.

Reinforcement practices can be effective, but they are extrinsic forms of motivation, inclining students to view learning as a means to an end -- earning a reward. Excessive use of rewards may lead to resentment, limited transfer, dependence on teachers, and undermining of intrinsic motivation.

## 2. THE COGNITIVE VIEW OF MOTIVATION

The cognitive view stresses that human behavior is influenced by the way individuals perceive things. At any given moment, people are subjected to many forces that pull and push them in different directions. Cognitive theories of motivation developed as reaction to the behavioral views. One of the central assumptions in cognitive approaches is that people respond not to external events or physical conditions like hunger but rather to interpretations of these events.

Cognitive theorists stress that individuals are motivated when they experience a "cognitive disequilibrium", which results in a desire to find the solution to a problem. Arranging for pupils to experience a personal desire to find information or solutions is an intrinsic form of motivation in which learning occurs for its own sake. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to arouse a cognitive disequilibrium in all or even most students.

In cognitive theories, people are seen as active and curious, searching for information to solve personally relevant problems, ignoring hunger or even discomfort to focus on self-selected goals. Cognitive theorists emphasize intrinsic motivation.

## 3. THE HUMANISTIC VIEW OF MOTIVATION

The humanistic view of motivation developed as a reaction to the two dominate theories of the time -- behaviorism and Freudian psychoanalysis. Humanists such as Maslow and Rogers did not believe that behaviorism nor Freudian psychology fully explained why people do as they do.

Abraham Maslow proposed that human needs are arranged in hierarchical order. Deficiency needs (physiological, safety, belongingness, and love and esteem) must usually be satisfied before growth needs (self-actualization, knowing and understanding, aesthetic) exert an influence. When the deficiency needs have been satisfied, the growth motivated person seeks pleasurable tension and engages in self-directed learning. Teachers are in a key position to satisfy the deficiency needs, and they should remain aware that when the lower needs are not satisfied, students are likely to make either safety (nonproductive) choices or bad choices when they make decisions. Teachers can encourage pupils to make growth rather than safety choices by enhancing the attractiveness of learning situation likely to be beneficial and by minimizing the dangers of possible failure.

Humanistic interpretations of motivation emphasize personal freedom, choice, self-determination, and striving for personal growth. Humanistic psychologists stress the importance of intrinsic motivation. In many humanistic theories, the role of needs is central. Humanistic educators are interested in how the affective (emotional and interpersonal) aspects of behavior influence learning.

## C. THEORIES IMPACTING ON MOTIVATION

### 1. SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

Social learning theories of motivation are the integration of the behavioral and cognitive approaches. Both the effects of outcomes and the impact of individual beliefs are taken into account. Motivation is seen as the impact of two forces: (a) the individual's expectation of reaching a goal and (b) the value of that goal to him or her. Bandura's (1981) social cognitive theory suggests several basic sources of motivation. One source consists of the possible outcomes of our behavior and another is our sense of self-efficacy. Clearly, our ability to imagine ourselves succeeding at a particular task will be determined by our sense of self-efficacy in that area. Another source of motivation is the active setting of goals.

### 2. ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Attribution theories of motivation describe how the individual's explanations, justifications, and excuses influence motivation.

According to Weiner (1980), a primary founder of this theory, most of the causes to which students attribute their success or failure can be classified along three different dimensions as:

- internal or external
- stable or unstable
- controllable or uncontrollable

The internal/external dimension seems to be closely related to feelings of confidence, self-esteem, pride, guilt, or shame (Weiner, 1980). The stability dimension is related to expectations about the future, while the control dimension is related to both confidence and future expectations.

Studies that led to this theory revealed that low achievers tend to attribute failure to do well in school to lack of ability and therefore assume that there is no point in making greater efforts to succeed. When low achievers are successful they tend to attribute it to luck. High achievers attribute failure to lack of effort and assume they can succeed if they try harder.

The greatest problems with motivation arise when students attribute their failures to internal, stable, and uncontrollable causes. This leads to apathy and a resistance to seeking assistance. Eventually, this can lead to "learned helplessness." Thus students are likely to become apathetic and hard to reach--hard to teach if they believe the cause of their failure is due to their own doing (internal), is unlikely to change (stable), and is beyond their control.

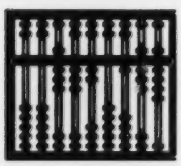
## 3. AROUSAL THEORY

Arousal involves both physical and psychological reactions. When we are aroused, there are changes in brain wave patterns, heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing rate. Research suggests that there is an optimal level of arousal for most activities. This theory is based on the idea that normal human beings can be described as organisms whose "state of consciousness" varies from sleep to high excitement.

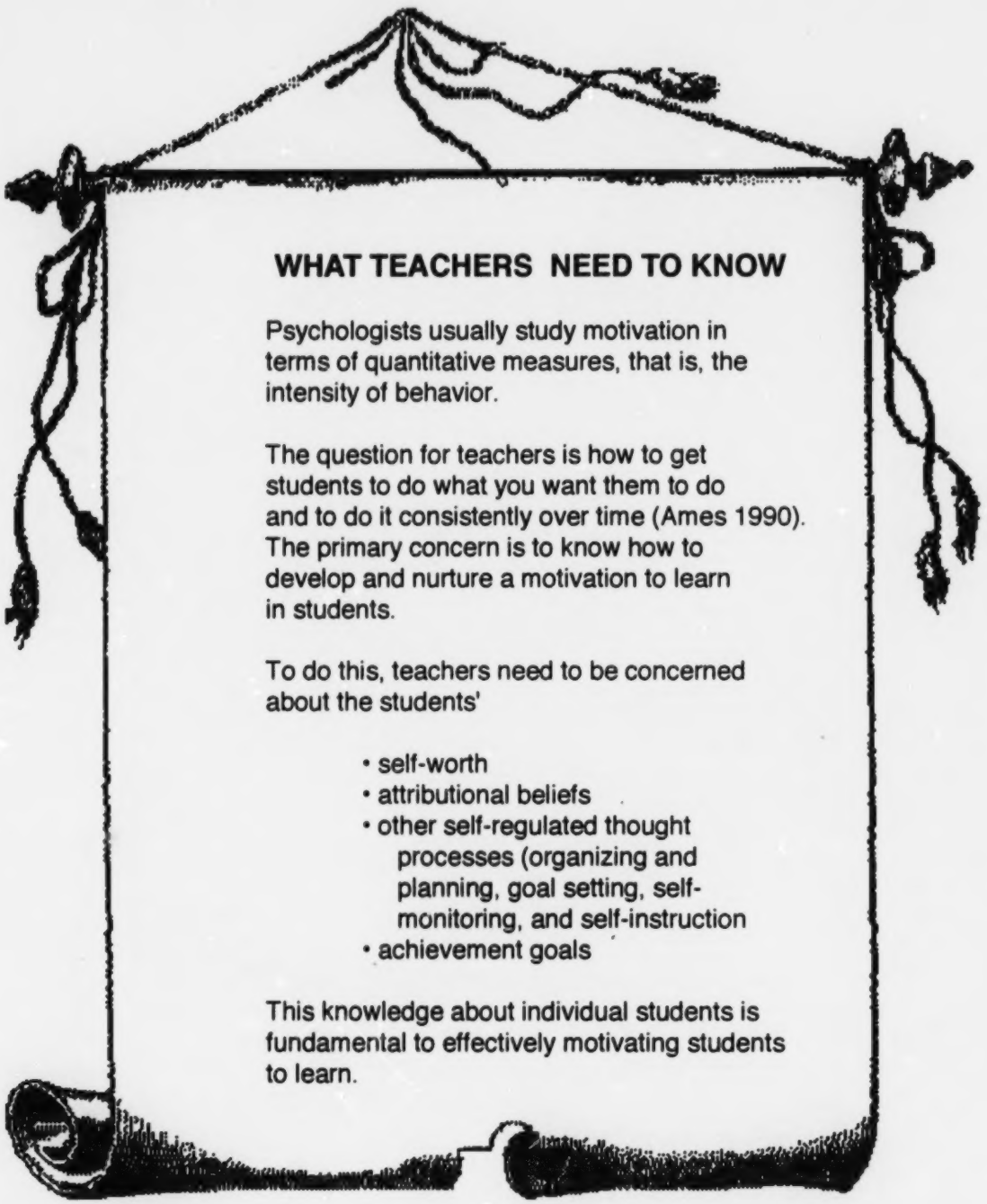
The relevance of the arousal theory for education depends on the teacher's control over variables that affect arousal. Factors that affect arousal are all sources of stimulation, but rather than the amount, more important are the intensity, meaningfulness, novelty, complexity, and incongruity of the stimuli.

## 4. EXPECTANCY X VALUE THEORY

Known as the Expectancy X Value Theory, this theory posits that the effort people will expend on a task is a product of: (a) the degree to which they expect to be able to perform the task successfully and (b) the degree to which they value participation in the task itself or the rewards that successful task completion will bring them. This theory implies that in order to motivate students to learn, teachers need to help them to appreciate the value of academic activities and make sure they can achieve success if they apply reasonable effort (Feather, 1982). This theory provides a starting point in analyzing students' level of motivation to learn. By examining the students' expectation to achieve and the value he/she places on the outcome, teachers have a basis for educational decision making.



## D. WHAT TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MOTIVATION AND TEACHING



### WHAT TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW

Psychologists usually study motivation in terms of quantitative measures, that is, the intensity of behavior.

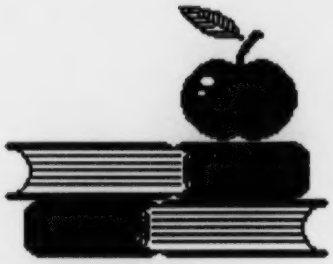
The question for teachers is how to get students to do what you want them to do and to do it consistently over time (Ames 1990). The primary concern is to know how to develop and nurture a motivation to learn in students.

To do this, teachers need to be concerned about the students'

- self-worth
- attributional beliefs
- other self-regulated thought processes (organizing and planning, goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-instruction
- achievement goals

This knowledge about individual students is fundamental to effectively motivating students to learn.

## E. MOTIVATION AND TEACHING A SUMMARY*



Following is a summary of major concepts teachers need to know about motivation and teaching.

### 1. THE CONCEPT OF MOTIVATION

A motivated learner acquires what he/she learns more readily than one who is not motivated. The relevant motives include both general and specific ones, for example, the desire to learn, need for achievement (general), the desire for a reward or for avoidance of a threatened punishment (specific). Motivation is the willingness to expend a certain amount of effort to achieve a particular goal. Motivation to master classroom tasks is affected by the nature of the learning tasks, the characteristics of the students, the classroom atmosphere, and the personality and approach of the teacher.

The study of motivation is an examination of how and why people initiate actions directed toward specific goals and persist in their attempts to reach these goals. Explanations of motivation include both personal and environmental factors as well as intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation.

### 2. BEHAVIORISTS VIEW

Behaviorists tend to emphasize extrinsic motivation caused by incentives, rewards, and punishment. Primary and secondary reinforcers play a large role. When reinforcement is used excessively by teachers, some students may resent the teacher for being manipulative, learning may occur only when reinforcement is provided, some students may become dependent on the teacher, and intrinsic motivation for a task may be discouraged.

### 3. HUMANISTIC VIEW

Humanistic views stress the intrinsic motivation created by the need for personal growth and fulfillment. This view is based on satisfying a hierarchical sequence of deficiency needs (safety, love, etc.) so a person can satisfy their growth needs (self-actualization, knowledge, and understanding). A limitation of the humanistic view is that it may not always be possible for teachers to identify a student's unmet deficiency need or to satisfy it once it is identified.

### 4. COGNITIVE VIEW

Cognitive psychologists stress a person's active search for meaning, understanding, competence, and the power of the individual's beliefs and interpretations. Cognitive theories stress the use of intrinsic motivation. These theories posit that individuals are motivated when they experience cognitive disequilibrium. One limitation of the cognitive view is that it may not always be possible to induce a sense of disequilibrium in students.

Social learning views suggest that motivation to reach a goal is the product of our expectations for success and the value of the goal to us. If either is zero, our motivation is zero.

## 5. AROUSAL THEORY

Most activities have an optimal level of arousal. If arousal is too low in classrooms, teachers can energize students by tapping their interest and arousing curiosity. Severe anxiety is an example of arousal that is too high for optimal learning. Anxiety can be the cause or the result of poor performance.

## 6. ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION

The theory of achievement motivation says that individuals are motivated by a need to achieve. Individuals with a high need to achieve aspire to goals of intermediate difficulty in order to balance success and failure. Individuals with a low need to achieve aspire either to very easy goals or to very difficult goals because they are motivated primarily by a fear of failure. Some individuals, instead of being motivated by fear of failure, are motivated primarily by fear of success.

## 7. ATTRIBUTION THEORY

The attribution theory of motivation suggests that the explanations people give for behavior, particularly their own success and failures, have strong influence on future plans and performance. One of the important features of an attribution is whether it is internal or external. High achievers attribute success to ability and effort and attribute failure to insufficient effort while low achievers attribute success to luck or task difficulty and failure to lack of ability. When people believe that ability is fixed, they tend to set performance goals and strive to protect themselves from failure. When they believe ability is improvable, however, they tend to set learning goals and handle failure constructively. Low sense of self-worth seems to be linked with failure avoiding and failure accepting strategies. A limitation of the achievement and attribution approaches to motivation is that they are difficult to observe and analyze.

## 8. COMPLEXITY OF MOTIVATION

The problems of motivation are so intertwined with problems of personality that an adequate account of motivation in relation to learning can not rest solely on the findings of the learning laboratory. A classroom is a social situation, with a power structure, including peer relationships and adult-child relationships, hence the most favorable motivational conditions need to take all of these factors into account recognizing the teacher is both model and reinforcer, and in ways not fully understood, a releaser of intrinsic motives. Student motivation to learn is both a trait and a state. It involves taking academic work seriously, trying to get the most from it, and applying appropriate learning strategies in the process.

## 9. TASKS AS A FACTOR IN MOTIVATION

The type of tasks that teachers set affect motivation. Tasks that are difficult and require critical thinking are risky and ambiguous. Students often seek to lower the risk and ambiguity in tasks through negotiation with the teacher. Tasks can have attainment, intrinsic, or utility value for students. Attainment value is the importance of succeeding to the student. Intrinsic value is the enjoyment the students get from the task. Utility value is determined by how much the task contributes to reaching short term or long term goals.

## 10. REWARD STRUCTURES AS A FACTOR IN MOTIVATION

The type of classroom reward structure that a teacher selects can encourage or discourage motivation. Four basic reward structures are individual competition, group competition, group reward (cooperation), and individual reward. For most classroom tasks, competitive reward structures discourage motivation and achievement while cooperative and individual reward structures enhance motivation and achievement. Cooperative learning structures are especially effective in encouraging learning in low achievers.

## 11. TEACHER ATTITUDES AS A FACTOR IN MOTIVATION

Teacher attitudes also influence student motivation. Some teachers are more concerned with giving the appearance of being a good teacher than with helping students. Other teachers are motivated out of a sense of moral responsibility to help students learn. Finally, some teachers see improving student learning as a task they can master through ability and effort.

## 12. LEARNING SKILLS AS A FACTOR IN MOTIVATION

Because classroom learning is cognitive, compulsory, and publicly evaluated, motivation for learning is likely to be optimal when students know they possess learning skills and when they value those skills. Thus, teachers may need to provide prerequisite skill development for optimal learning to occur.

## 13. SELF-CONCEPT AS A FACTOR IN MOTIVATION

Student's self-worth is intricately tied to their self-concept of ability in school settings. This self-concept of ability or self-efficacy has significant consequences for student achievement behavior. Self-efficacy is an expectation or belief that one is capable of performing a specific task and organizing and carrying out required behaviors in a situation. Strategies to encourage motivation to learn should help students feel confidence in their abilities to improve, value the tasks of learning, and stay involved in the process with-out being threatened by fear of failure.

* The above list is an adaptation and compilation of information from:

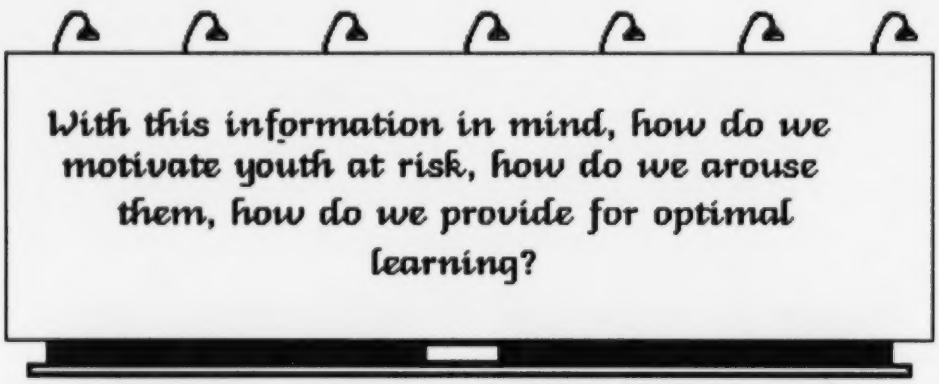
Beihler and Snowman (1990), Woolfolk (1990), and Schurr (1989).

# V. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

## INTRODUCTION

No motivational strategies can succeed with students if certain preconditions are not met (Brophy, 1987). If the classroom is chaotic or if the students are anxious or alienated, they are unlikely to be motivated to learn academic content, thus the **classroom climate must create a supportive environment**. A second precondition is to provide an **appropriate level of challenge/difficulty**. Students will be bored if tasks are too easy and frustrated if tasks are too difficult. **Meaningful learning objectives** are another precondition for motivating students to work. Teachers need to select academic activities that teach some knowledge or skill that is worth learning, either in its own right or as a step toward a higher objective. And finally, techniques will lose effectiveness if they are used too often or too routinely. Teachers should **use motivational strategies in moderation** to expect optimal impact (Brophy, 1987).

Classroom management is a major concern of teachers who work with youth at risk. Motivating students to learn is a powerful tool a teacher has in preventing classroom discipline problems. When students are motivated to learn, they usually pay attention to the lesson, become actively involved in learning, and direct their energies toward the learning task. There are many variables a teacher can manipulate to increase student motivation to learn (Levin & Nolan, 1991).


With this information in mind, how do we motivate youth at risk, how do we arouse them, how do we provide for optimal learning?

Now let's consider practical suggestions for effective teaching and motivating youth at risk. Strategies from four perspectives will be discussed:

1) **classroom climate**
2) **content**
3) **instructional qualities**
4) **personal qualities**

## A. CLASSROOM CLIMATE

The most effective **emotional climate** in the classroom is a moderately positive atmosphere in which the climate is pleasant and friendly but clearly focused on the learning task at hand. Teachers control the emotional climate of the classroom through their treatment of students, their nonverbal and verbal behaviors, and the physical decor of the room. Many teachers set the tone of the classroom by attending to students between classes. This interaction gives the teacher an opportunity to remember parents, special activities, comment on health, absence, or a school event. The message is, "I care."

- **Get to know students.**
- **Learn their names** right away and know their dreams.
- **Find ways to help students know each other.**
  Remember that youth at risk feel a sense of alienation.
- **Insist that students show respect for each other.**
  Create a classroom climate of trust and acceptance.
- **Help meet student needs.**
  Motivation to learn is increased when students perceive that learning activities provide an opportunity to meet some of their basic needs. Ecouraging students to work with peers on learning activities can help meet their need for a sense of belongingness and acceptance from others. Providing a pleasant, task-oriented climate helps meet the students need for psychological safety and security.
- **Recognize student effort.**
  Human beings have a natural tendency to search for causes of success and failure. Research has determined five factors that students normally attribute to success and failure: (a) effort, (b) ability, (c) luck, (d) others, and (e) the difficulty of the task. The only factor within the student's control is effort. When students believe that their own effort is more important to success than the other variables, they are more likely to succeed. A student who places their belief in effort knows that they have a better chance of changing failure into success in the future. Teachers can help students develop this belief by assigning work at the appropriate level of difficulty and recognizing student effort rather than luck, others, or ability (Levin and Nolan, 1991).
- **Use tension in moderation.**
  A moderate amount of tension increases student learning. Tension is created by holding students accountable for their work, calling on a variety of students, giving quizzes on work, checking homework and seatwork, and helping students feel a responsible part of the teaching learning environment
- **Notice physical condition of the classroom.**
  Remember students learn from all senses. Make use of all parts of room as a teaching aid.

➡ **Provide novelty and variety for stimulation.**
Change posters, bulletin boards, pictures, even the furniture, if possible. When teachers plan activities that include novel events, situations and materials, students are more likely to be motivated to learn. Once students' attentions have been captured, teachers are more likely to keep the students involved. For example, a home economics teacher who was including basic mathematics skills in the class had a "straight from the oven, heavenly smelling" baking dish of brownies ready for the class when they come in the room. She gave them each a sheet of paper with the dimensions of the dish and number of students in the class. When they could figure out how best to cut the brownies so everyone could have one, they could do so. This is a fun way, a novel way to encourage students to learn basic mathematics skills. A variation of this is to tell students the recipe had to be doubled. When they figured out the amounts needed to make the brownies, they could share. Encouraging students to help each other learn is a bonus on this activity.

Students' attention spans can be expanded with good activities and variety; however, most of us burn out after 15 to 20 minutes. An effective teacher will plan a variety of student activities that truly encompasses different learning activities for the student, not the teacher. For example, some teachers will say, "I plan for variety. In family relationships, I might open the lesson with a short story, then show a video for 15 minutes, and then close with a mini lecture." This is a good case of teacher variety but the students, sat and listened, sat and listened, and sat and listened. Variety means changing the student learning activity. A better example would be to open with a short story, have small groups of students write an analogy to the story, then video tape their analogy for class to view and critique the next day, thus providing students with varied activity.

To illustrate these points, Dr. Vail suggested I share an experience I had my first year of teaching. I began my career as an English teacher assigned to teach grammar and literature to eighth graders. When I arrived at my room, I found students who had no interest in the eighth-grade literature book and less interest in grammar. What was I to do? I decided to become better acquainted with my students and discovered that a common interest among my 35 students was "Chiller Theater." They loved "Chiller Theater" and movies like Thriller, Child's Play, Friday the 13th, Halloween, and Nightmare on Elm Street. So using this knowledge, I sought and was granted permission to teach Edgar Allen Poe rather than the short stories in the eighth grade literature book. We began with "The Pit and the Pendulum." It's a scary story, but how was I to get the students' interest, how was I to get them to want to read Edgar Allen Poe with those big words and complex sentences? Well, I found a record of "The Pit and the Pendulum" read by Vincent Price. In that deep rich voice, I knew he would captivate my students, but could this be done on a bright sunny afternoon? The setting needed a little work. When my students arrived, we pulled down the blinds, turned off the lights, and began our love affair with Edgar Allen Poe. (Redick, 1988; Redick & Vail, 1990).

Creating a classroom climate begins with knowing our students, using their current interest to lead them to new horizons, and using novelty, complexity, and incongruity to capture their interests.

## B. CONTENT

- ➡ Begin with **clear objectives** that are challenging but attainable.
- ➡ Make clear why the **objectives** are **important and worth attaining.** But be flexible and be aware of the teachable moment.

Take for example, the second grade teacher who has as one mission the encouragement, if not establishment of subject-verb agreement in the language of students. The goal is clear; its approximation is measurable, and a fair segment of the community thinks its a defensible goal. And consider this teacher who asked the children to draw a picture about how they felt and to write underneath the picture some words to explain it. And consider the child carrying out this assignment who drew a picture of a tombstone with his initials on it and under that wrote, "sometimes I wish I was dead" And, consider this teacher whose response was to cross out <u>was</u> and to write in <u>were</u>. That clarity and singularity of purpose is precisely what kept that teacher from being the teacher he/she could have been, in that setting, with that child, at that moment. He/she missed the teachable moment (Canfield & Wells, 1976).

- ➡ **Cultivate curiosity and creativity.** Invite students to participate in planning and evaluating their curriculum.
- ➡ **Build on students' existing interest** while trying to create new ones. A basic principle of learning is to take students from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Teachers can motivate students to learn by relating subject content to student interests in life outside of school. In home economics, this is a 'natural.' The trick is discovering the students' interests and helping them see the relationships. Students' interest in movies, television shows, sports, music, and fashion can be used to provide a foundation to integrate home economics content in real-life interest areas of students.
- ➡ **Organize curriculum around real-life problems,** their problems. Relevancy is the key word.
- ➡ **Balance content** between required core learning and optional, enhancement learning.

Using my students' love of "Chiller Theater" to encourage them to study literature is an example of moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar. With my students help, we used the Poe stories to create spelling lists, diagram sentences, and learn structure of paragraphs. We learned the

basic core requirements of eighth-grade English concentrating on writing skills. After my students read quite a few of the stories, they wanted to try writing their own. No, they didn't measure up to the excellence of Poe but everyone contributed their story, and after all were read (using creative ways of creating a classroom climate, I might add), the class chose one they wanted to rewrite into a play which of course had to be produced. We learned the basic core requirements and included optional, enhancement learning (Redick, 1988; Redick & Vail, 1990).

## C. INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITIES

- Provide each student with **an opportunity to make an important contribution** to class activities.
- **Build in success factors.**
  When students achieve at a task they perceive as at least somewhat challenging, their motivation for future learning is greatly enhanced. Constant failure leads to despair and often disruptive behavior. It is important for teachers to create success for those who are not normally successful, that is, youth at risk. Success is created when the teacher manipulates the variables of level of difficulty, amount of work, sequencing, and clarity.
- Provide each student with **an opportunity to experience success and then recognize that success.**
  Every person needs recognition. It is expressed cogently by the lad who says, "Mother, let's play darts. I'll throw the darts and you say 'wonderful'." The most important role a teacher can play is to be the one to say "wonderful" (Canfield & Wells, 1976). Recognizing excellence and assuring that all students are recognized is an important part of successful teaching (Levin & Nolan, 1991).
- **Provide students with effective feedback** or helpful information about their progress, be prompt, and be clear about the criteria for success. Motivation to learn is increased by giving specific feedback to students concerning their performance. Knowledge about degree of effort and degree of success motivates students because it can be used for future successes. Feedback is most effective when it is specific and given soon after the performance.
- **Be a coach,** encourage, urge, and sometimes push.
- **Help students participate in guided wonderment.** Arouse their curiosity, enhance their desire to wonder.
- **Use analogies, stories, and poetry** to develop a concept and help your students to do the same.
- **Build in learning skills** not just content. Teachers can encourage success by helping students with essential study skills, such as outlining, note taking, and using textbooks correctly.

➧ **Break tasks into manageable pieces.**
For example, the child development teacher who asks students to write a paper on the analysis of a current popular children's movie might give the assignment in parts rather than "your assignment is to write a paper." The teacher could show the video in class and teach the students to take appropriate notes. Then teach how to outline the paper. Students might write sections of the paper and be given feedback before the entire paper is written.

➧ **When students fail, help them to see some hope** -- by seeing what was good. This can turn failure into learning.

➧ **Help students to be self-evaluators** by helping them to see the good in what they do.

➧ **Provide encouragement**
Teachers often get into the habit of telling students their shortcomings rather than their progress. For example, a student who scored 68 on a test has learned twice as much as he/she failed to learn but most teachers would concentrate on what has not been learned. Encouragement recognizes the positive aspects of behavior, recognizes and rewards real effort, communicates positive trust, respect, and belief in the students. Encouragement puts the emphasis on present and future behavior rather than past transgressions and on what is being learned rather than on what is not learned. Criticism erodes the students self-esteem while encouragement builds self-esteem (Levin & Nolan 1991).

➧ **Write notes to students.** A note from the teacher can be surprisingly wonderful.

PEANUTS
LOOK, CHARLIE BROWN! A LETTER FROM MISS OTHMAR!
ONLY HER NAME ISN'T OTHMAR ANY MORE...IT'S MRS. HAGEMEYER! SHE THANKS ME FOR THE EGG SHELLS I SENT, AND SAYS SHE'LL KEEP THEM FOREVER...
2-6
AND SHE SAYS SHE MISSES ALL THE KIDS IN HER CLASS, BUT YOU KNOW WHO SHE SAYS SHE MISSES MOST? ME!!
Schulz

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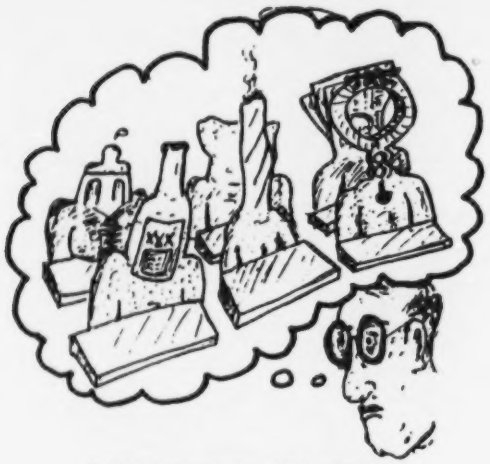
## D. PERSONAL QUALITIES

We know that the teacher as a person is more important than the teacher as a technician. What he/she is has more effect than anything he/she does (Canfield & Wells, 1976). Teachers, as well as students, bring attitudes into the classroom as these cartoons depict:



Printed by permission of Brian Riegel.

*"If you think this is rough, then you've never handled a sophomore study hall."*

Reprinted by permission of Dave Carpenter

Personal qualities and behaviors which teachers should strive to develop include the following:

- **Search for ways to express care for each student.**
- **Never belittle or ridicule a student.**
- **Project enthusiasm.**
- **Avoid distracting behaviors or overuse of terms.**
- **Use movement;** don't stay behind the desk.
- **Be genuine.**
- **Know yourself and teach to your strengths.**
- **Take care of yourself.**
  When you travel by plane, attendants give instructions before take off. Often they will say, "Should the conditions change within the cabin an oxygen mask will descend. If you are traveling with children, put your own mask on first so you will be able to help the child." As teachers, we need to remember to 'put on our oxygen masks' first and take care of ourselves, if we are to help our students.
- **Expect the best.**
- **Believe they can achieve.**

Do you remember Eliza Doolittle speaking to Colonel Pickering in *My Fair Lady* . . . "You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on) the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will."

➧ Let your love of learning show, be curious, be interested, and be their role model for life-long learning.

Ginott (1983) eloquently describes the role of the teacher. "I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a student's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or deescalated and a person humanized or dehumanized"

Bright days ahead

## E. HIGHLIGHTS OF RESEARCH ON STRATEGIES FOR MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO LEARN

Brophy (1987) has reviewed the research related to motivating students to learn. As a result of the comprehensive review, Brophy has delineated 33 promising principles suitable for application in classrooms:

➡ **Essential Preconditions**

1. Supportive environment
2. Appropriate level of challenge/ difficulty
3. Meaningful learning objectives
4. Moderation/optional use

➡ **Motivating by Maintaining Success Expectations**

5. Program for success
6. Teach goal setting, performance appraisal, and self-reinforcement
7. Help students to recognize linkages between effort and outcome
8. Provide remedial socialization

➡ **Motivating by Supplying Extrinsic Incentives**

9. Offer rewards for good (or improved) performance
10. Structure appropriate competition
11. Call attention to the instrumental value of academic activities

➡ **Motivating by Capitalizing on Students' Intrinsic Motivation**

12. Adapt tasks to students' Interests
13. Include novelty/variety elements
14. Allow opportunities to make choices or autonomous decisions
15. Provide opportunities for students to respond actively
16. Provide immediate feedback to student responses
17. Allow students to create finished products
18. Include fantasy or simulation elements
19. Incorporate game-like features
20. Include higher-level objectives and divergent questions
21. Provide opportunities to interact with peers

➡ **Stimulating Student Motivation to Learn**

22. Model interest in learning and motivation to learn
23. Communicate desirable expectations and attributions about students' motivation to learn
24. Minimize students' performance anxiety during learning activities
25. Project intensity
26. Project enthusiasm
27. Induce task interest or appreciation
28. Induce curiosity or suspense
29. Induce dissonance or cognitive conflict
30. Make abstract content more personal, concrete, or familiar
31. Induce students to generate their own motivation to learn
32. State learning objectives and provide advance organizers
33. Model task-related thinking and problem solving

Brophy, Jere. (1987). Table from "Synthesis of Research on Strategies for Motivating Students to Learn," Educational Leadership, 45,(2), 45. Reprinted with permission of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Copyright © 1985 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reseved.

# VI. SUMMARY

Youth at risk include students with a wide range of descriptors including behavioral, environmental, and individual characteristics. Knowing these descriptors can help teachers better identify factors that are likely to impact on learning. Individual differences do affect the teaching/leaning situation.. The more teachers know and understand each student the more likely they are to make effective educational decisions regarding that student.

A primary concern of teachers is how to motivate students to learn. Understanding theories of motivation provides a foundation for successfully teaching students while research-based teaching strategies provide a starting point for teachers to take action.

While the role of the teacher can be powerful, it is sometimes overwhelming to consider the diversity and needs of our students in the classroom. It is important to remember that we cannot meet all of the students' needs all of the time, but we can provide support and understanding. We can provide a safe, secure classroom where learning takes place. We cannot solve poverty or family conflicts immediately but we can understand that a hungry child or an abused child might not place high priority on learning. These students need effective motivation for learning. Through the classroom climate we create, the content and instructional strategies we chose, and the person we are, we can effectively motivate students, including youth at risk.

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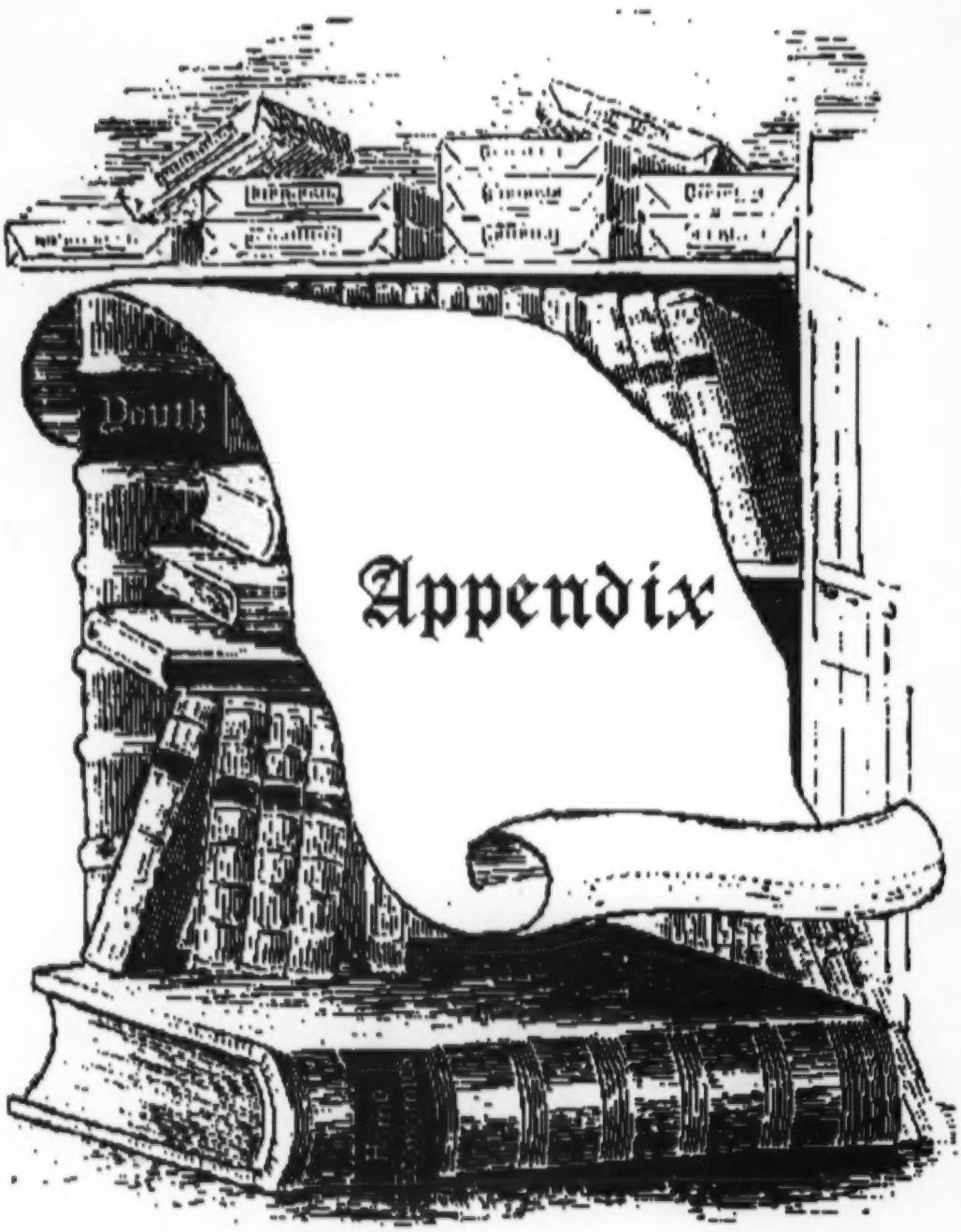
Youth
Appendix

# HISTORICAL REVIEW OF MOTIVATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Weiner (1990) reviewed five volumes of the Encyclopedia of Educational Research which covered six decades of the study of motivation as it relates to education. This review provides insights into the focus of psychological study through each decade.

*Table 1* **HISTORICAL REVIEW OF MOTIVATION RESEARCH AND IMPLICATION FOR EDUCATION**

| **The 30s and 40s** | |
|---|---|
| **Major Theories:** | Need Theories (Maslow and Rogers)<br>Drive Theories (Hull)<br>Field Theories (Lewin) |
| **Focus of Research:** | Need and activity level<br>Incentives<br>Defense Mechanisms<br>Degree of motivation |
| **Application for Education:** | Praise and reproof<br>Success and failure<br>Knowledge of results<br>Cooperation and competition<br>Reward and punishment |

| **The 50s** | |
|---|---|
| **Major Theories:** | Drive theories |
| **Focus of Research:** | Drive and learning<br>Drive and frustration<br>Activation of drive and motives<br>Reward<br>Knowledge of results<br>Fear and anxiety<br>Arousal |
| **Application for Education:** | Little focus on education applications at this time. |

*Table 1* **HISTORICAL REVIEW OF MOTIVATION RESEARCH AND IMPLICATION FOR EDUCATION (cont...)**

| **The 60s** | |
|---|---|
| **Major Theories:** | Associationistic Theory (Watson)<br>Drive Theory (Hull and Spence)<br>Cognitive Theory (Kewin and Atikinson)<br>Psychoanalytic (Freud) |
| **Focus of Research:** | Curiosity<br>Affiliation<br>Dissonance<br>Frustration<br>Aggression<br>Relating to processes:<br>Learning<br>Perception<br>Memory |
| **Application for Education:** | Achievement<br>Individual measures for achievement needs, anxiety and locus of control were devised |

| **The 70s** | |
|---|---|
| **Major Theories:** | Attribution Theory (Jones and Ranis, Kelly)<br>Achievement motivation (Atkinson, Weiner)<br>Humanistic Theories (Coombs and Rogers) |
| **Focus of Research:** | Anxiety<br>Self-esteem<br>Curiosity<br>Causal aspiration |
| **Application for Education:** | Individual differences<br>Anxiety about failure<br>Perceptions of control<br>Self-esteem<br>Self-efficacy |

*Table 1* **HISTORICAL REVIEW OF MOTIVATION RESEARCH AND IMPLICATION FOR EDUCATION (cont...)**

| **The 80s** | |
|---|---|
| **Major Theories:** | Cognitive theories<br>Social Learning theories (Bandura) |
| **Focus of Research:** | Causal attributions<br>Self-efficacy<br>Learned helplessness<br>Individual difference<br>Need for achievement<br>Anxiety about failure<br>Locus of control<br>Attributional cycle<br>Environmental determinants<br>Cooperation vs. competition<br>Goal structures<br>Intrinsic vs. extrinsic rewards<br>Praise |
| **Application for Education:** | Importance of self as a determinant of success and failure. |

Weiner summarizes the 1990 volume which he edited as follows:

1. The grand formal theories that composed the first part of volume 1969 drive, psychoanalytic, cognitive, and associationistic conceptions have for the most part faded away. After all, Freud's emphasis on the unconscious, sexual motivation and conflict and Hull's emphasis on drive and drive reduction seem to have little relevance in classroom contexts. What remains are varieties of cognitive approaches to motivation: the main theories today are based on the interrelated cognition of causal ascriptions, efficacy and control beliefs, helplessness, and thoughts about the goals for which one is striving.

2. Achievement strivings remain at the center of the study of motivation. There are major pockets of research on power motivation, affiliation, exploratory behavior and curiosity, altruism, aggression and so on. These are studied with a focus on domain specific content rather than on the development of general theory.

Within the achievement field, a somewhat new approach is vying for a dominant role. Known as Goal Theory, it embraces the linked concepts of ego involvement, competitive reward structure, social comparison (as the indicator of success); and ability attributions (as contrasted with task involvement, cooperative structure, and self-comparison).

3. There is increasing incorporation of a variety of cognitive variables, as exemplified in the triad of causal cognition, efficacy beliefs, and helplessness, as well as in the sources of information (self or others) that are used to determine success or failure. However, the main new cognitive direction is the inclusion of the self. Indeed, even the aforementioned cognition all concern perceptions about the self as a determinant of prior or future success and failure. Add to these the constructs of self-actualization, self-concept, self-determination, self-esteem, self- focus, and self-handicapping and it is evident that the self is on the verge of dominating motivation.

4. The review of individual differences variables conveyed that this direction of motivational research is rapidly diminishing, if it has not already been abandoned. The difficulty with motivational (as opposed to cognitive) trait concepts is the lack of cross situational generality.

According to Weiner (1990), during the 90s, psychologists will focus on the self and all aspects of the self as related to development and education.